

I know a guy
who won a varsity letter in Rodeo
at San Luis Obispo State College
(his special event, if I remember correctly,
consisted in severing prairie oysters with a chicken-wire
lassoo.).

He likes to talk, about the school,
about, for instance, the good fellowship in the dorm
where once a week the guys got out the telltale tape
and measured each other's cocks.

He admits it was no Harvard,
but what the hell, he urges,
slamming his beer mug for emphasis,
it was no Dominguez Hills either,
where the elevation is a fathom below sea level
and the poet-in-residence reportedly doubles
as night watchman in the oil fields,
and, in spite of the luminescent sign at the Avalon Blvd.
offramp,
no one has ever discovered the campus,
or, at any rate, returned to tell of it.

dogshit, and other sorrows
(for rod mckuen)

outside my door the sun bakes dogshit cakes.
i write a letter to my lawyer.
the baby is pulling the poor cat's tail.
the boob tube is busted.

i hear a new dog scratching at the sidewalk.
early this morning, shitfaced,
i tiptoed home through dogshit.
this afternoon the neighbor's kid sat down in it.

i write a letter to my lawyer, sign it robert lowell.
to my mistress, sign it rod mckuen.
to my credit union, sign it ezra pound.
i reach outside the door, dip my pen, and write myself a
letter.
the baby picks the cat up by the tail.
my wife says shit.
the baby imitates her.
i think i hear the cat gasp something vaguely fecal.

i open a letter from my mistress.
you'll never guess what she has sent me.
i open a letter from my mother.
also, some manuscripts have been returned, a little brown
along the edges.

i wake at night from dreams of st. bernards,
prelapsarian great danes,

tunged and vastly coloned.
barefoot, suffocating, i step outside the door.

the toilet is busted.
the diaper pail is brimming.
the cat is suffering from sour milk.
opening my typewriter, i find the muse has left me something
vile.

i close the typewriter,
tuck my wife and child and cat in bed,
and take a walk down to the local stonehenge
where i execute a desperate aztec two-step.

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(words for whatserass)

when i left you monday
i had no idea it was over.
you were good for me in bed;
i hadn't stayed so long in months.

but tuesday my car broke down.
wednesday i ran the quarter mile in eighty seconds.
thursday my wife got pregnant.
friday i wrote my memoirs.

saturday the paraplegic in the bar
told me you were expecting a call.
i preferred to play a game of chess with him,
which i lost.

sunday was my day of rest.
i never got out of bed.
my kind wife gave me a bourbon transfusion every hour.
on the tube, charley chan was disguised as a panama hatter.

today jim asked me, "where is mary these days?"
"mary who?" i asked.
he punched me in the mouth,
just as i was masticating some pretzles and a pickled egg.

(envoi)

love, i started out to write a love poem,
but i couldn't remember your name.
that is a reflection on me, not you.
you were not merely a nice girl, but a better-than-average
lay as well.

-- Gerald Locklin

Long Beach, California